



Multi-National Corps – Iraq

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MNC-I leaders visit 20th Engineers

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BAGHDAD – Soldiers from Fort Bragg’s 20th Engineer Brigade showcased their capabilities to senior Multi-National Corps – Iraq leadership at their headquarters in Balad, Iraq, earlier this month.

The Brigade Soldiers spoke to and asked question of Lt. Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, the commanding general of MNC-I and Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph R. Allen, the command sergeant major of MNC-I.

Soldiers asked questions about ending the war, combating special groups and increasing retention rates in Iraq. Soldiers also gave the command group a tour of their motor pool and a demonstration on the various types of route clearance equipment. Their demonstration included the Husky armored recovery vehicle and Buffalo mine protected carrier vehicles as well as a demonstration of rapid-crater repair techniques by the 224th Combat Support Engineers.

“It’s always a privilege to have the MNC-I commander come and recognize deserving Soldiers,” said Col. Peter A. De Luca, the commander of the 20th Engineer Brigade. “The fact that some of our units are in transition now made it a good send off

for some departing Soldiers who made a big difference in the improving security situation in Iraq.”

“It’s nice to see someone at the top wants to learn about something regular E-4 foot Soldiers do,” said Spc. Mike Yem, with the 817th Engineer Separate Company. Yem briefed Austin and Allen on the Alvis RG31 medium mine protected vehicle, which specializes in route clearance patrol safety and IED interrogation.

“It’s good for morale,” said Spc. Scott Kreft, also with the 817th Engineer Separate Company. “Not everyone can say they shook hands with the general.”

The command group’s visit not only benefited the Soldiers, but the 20th Engineer leadership as well.

“The best way to understand and communicate is to see and hear in person and look people in the eye,” De Luca said. “It’s a great opportunity for us to give our point of view on trends, achievements and requirements and to exchange ideas and get guidance and decisions straight from the source with no garbling in transmission.”

The 20th Engineer Brigade is responsible for providing combat, geospatial and general engineering and reconstruction operations in partnership with Provincial Reconstruction Teams, Civil Service Corps, Sons of Iraq and Iraqi Army engineers.

The goal of these operations is to secure the population, protect the force and enable Coalition and Iraqi forces to perform their missions of combating insurgency. The 20th Engineers are also responsible for training and assisting the Iraqi Army and provincial engineers in the rebuilding of the infrastructure of Iraq.

“During its deployment to Iraq, 20th Engineer Soldiers have built 10 major bridges, destroyed and captured IED cells in nine Iraqi provinces and the improvement

of numerous roads to reduce IED vulnerability and make them safe for travel,” De Luca said.

Although some of the 20th Engineer Bde.’s units are preparing to head home, the troops still have their heads in the game.

“I am awed by their attitude and drive as they do what engineers love to do, solve problems creatively, fix broken, but needed things, build new needed things and always take the fight to our enemies in close combat,” De Luca said.

The 20th Engineer Brigade is set to be replaced by the 555th Engineer Brigade in fall 2008.



Lt. Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, left, the commanding general of Multi-National Corps – Iraq, and Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph Allen, the command sergeant major of MNC-I, speak to Soldiers of the 20th Engineer Brigade in Balad, Iraq May 10. Austin received briefings from the Soldiers on the capabilities of their route clearing equipment. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joy Pariente)



Lt. Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, the commanding general of Multi-National Corps – Iraq, and Thomasville, Ga. native, answers questions from Soldiers of the 20th Engineer Brigade in Balad, Iraq May 10. Soldier questions ranged from queries about increasing retention rates to asking how the U.S. would end the war in Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joy Pariente)



Lt. Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, the commanding general of Multi-National Corps – Iraq, shakes hands with Spc. Scott Kreft. Austin, a Thomasville, Ga. native, met with Kreft and Spc. Mike Yem, right, 817th Engineer Separate Company during a visit to Balad, Iraq May 10. Austin received briefings on route clearing equipment in use by the 20th Engineer Brigade during his visit. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joy Pariente)